

A PROFILE OF 2012 ACT-TESTED  
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

# College Choice Report

## Part 1 Preferences and Prospects

ACT is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development. Each year, we serve millions of people in high schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses, and government agencies, nationally and internationally. Though designed to meet a wide array of needs, all ACT programs and services have one guiding purpose—helping people achieve education and workplace success.

A copy of this report can be found at  
**[www.act.org/collegechoice](http://www.act.org/collegechoice)**



ACT has measured the academic achievement of 11th- and 12th-grade students since 1959, their career aspirations since 1969, and their academic preparation in high school since 1985. Since 1992, and every three to five years thereafter, ACT conducts the **ACT National Curriculum Survey®**, in which we survey thousands of high school and college educators to pinpoint the knowledge and skills needed for first-year college coursework.

ACT is the only organization with decades of empirical information showing what happens to high school graduates once they get to college or to work and how they can maximize success—based on their preparation from kindergarten through high school. This unique information is an invaluable resource as ACT works closely with states, school districts, and postsecondary institutions to transform them into better-aligned P–16 education systems.

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This *College Choice Report* is part of a report series that focuses on the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012. Other reports in this series are *The Condition of College & Career Readiness*, which highlights the academic readiness of high school graduates to enter college or career training, and *The Reality of College Readiness*, which highlights the relationships among readiness, college enrollment, and retention.

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# College Choice Report—Part 1

## Preferences and Prospects

### *Expanded Content and New Format*

Last year for the first time, ACT released the *Enrollment Management Trends Report* to provide enrollment managers and college admissions personnel with the enrollment patterns of the ACT-tested graduating class of 2011. After receiving positive feedback on the first report and requests for more information, we have expanded the content of the report this year to include information spanning multiple stages of the college choice process. Given this expanded content, we have elected to change the name of the report to more accurately describe it, and we have divided the report into two distinct parts:

- *College Choice Report—Part 1: Preferences and Prospects*
- *College Choice Report—Part 2: Enrollment Patterns*

*Part 1* of this report focuses on the self-reported college preferences and ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) participation rates of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012. *Part 2*, to be released at the ACT Enrollment Planners Conference in July 2013, will focus on the college enrollment of these ACT-tested high school graduates and address such topics as student mobility and migration patterns, the extent to which students' college choices match their preferences, and the enrollment rates of students selected through EOS.

In addition to the printed national report, this year we are providing interactive charts and maps online that allow you to view and compare information aggregated by state and region of the country. This new format gives you some opportunity to customize your view of the report content to better address your information needs. To view this content, go to [www.act.org/collegechoice](http://www.act.org/collegechoice).

### *How to Use This Report*

This report builds on a foundation of knowledge about the academic readiness of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 as presented in *The Condition of College & Career Readiness (www.act.org/readiness/2012)*. An important conclusion of the *Condition* report is that far too many high school graduates are not prepared for success in college and career as defined by their attainment of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. We encourage you to read through the *Condition* report to have a better context for interpreting the findings of this report.

A little more than half of the graduating class of 2012 took the ACT® Test during high school. Whether you are searching for prospective students locally or in other parts of the country, a better understanding of the preferences and college choice behaviors of ACT-tested students can improve your marketing and recruitment strategies. The information presented in this report and in the accompanying online charts and maps can provide insights to inform discussions on your campus about the desired characteristics and locations of prospective students and your strategies for recruiting them. For those colleges that participate in EOS, the information provided in this report can help you to establish or refine your selection criteria to create more efficient student searches. Over time, this report can also serve as a guide to help you gauge the effectiveness of your search, marketing, and recruitment strategies.

### *Sources*

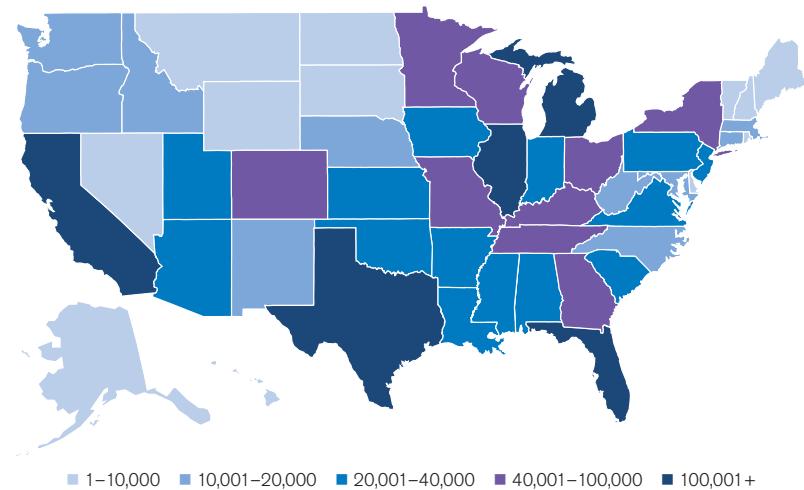
Unless otherwise noted, all information in this report comes from the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012. Information in this report—such as the students' background characteristics, grade level at time of testing, ACT Test scores, college preferences, and participation in EOS—is collected when students register for and take the ACT Test.

## Test Taking

Many high school students across the United States take the ACT Test in preparation for college.

- 1,666,017 students from the high school graduating class of 2012 took the ACT Test.
- Just over half (52%) of all ACT-tested high school graduates live in 9 states: CA, CO, FL, IL, MI, NY, OH, TN, and TX.
- Of the 9 states with the most ACT-tested high school graduates, 4 states (CO, IL, MI, and TN) administer the ACT Test statewide to all public high school 11th graders.

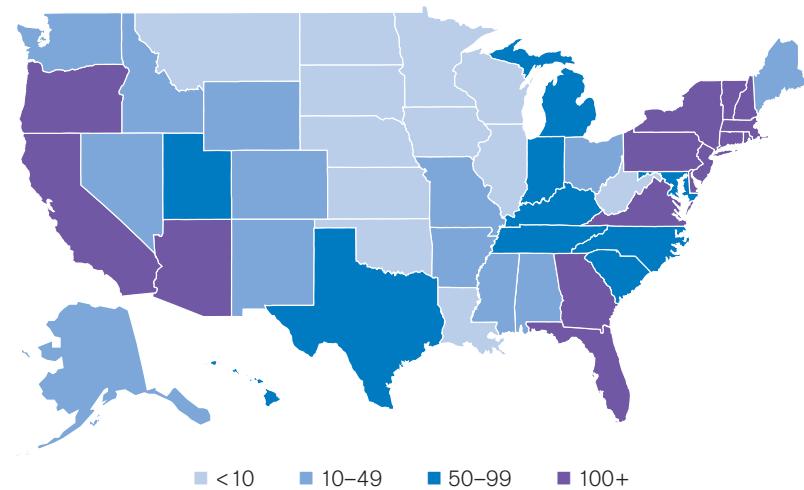
**Number of ACT-Tested High School Graduates, 2012**



Map reads: In Florida, more than 100,000 students from the high school graduating class of 2012 took the ACT Test.

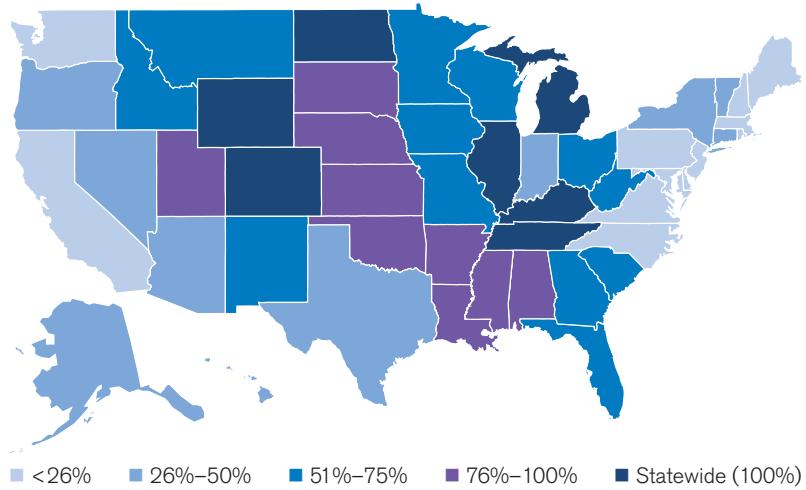
- Over the past 10 years, the number of high school graduates who took the ACT Test increased by 42%—up from 1,175,059 students in 2003.
- Just over half (51%) of this 10-year increase in the number of ACT-tested high school graduates can be attributed to test-taking increases in 6 states: CA, FL, GA, MI, NY, and TX.
- All 6 states are among the most populous with regard to ACT-tested graduates. Of these states, only Michigan began administering the ACT Test statewide to all 11th graders between 2003 and 2012.

**Percent Change in Number of ACT-Tested High School Graduates, 2003–2012**



Map reads: Between 2003 and 2012, the number of ACT-tested high school graduates in California increased by 100% or more.

## Percent of High School Graduates Who Take the ACT Test, 2012

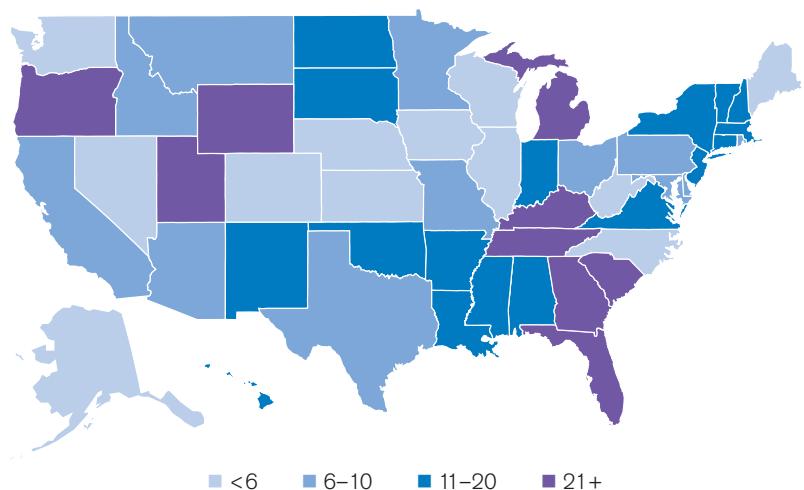


Map reads: Texas is one of the states in which 26%–50% of the high school graduating class of 2012 took the ACT Test.

The ACT Test participation rate—i.e., the percentage of high school graduates who take the ACT Test—varies by region and state. A state's ACT Test participation rate is a good indicator of the overall representation of ACT-tested graduates among all high school graduates in that state.

- Nationally, just over half (52%) of all students from the high school graduating class of 2012 took the ACT Test.
- High school graduates in 7 states (CO, IL, KY, ND, MI, TN, and WY) participated in a statewide administration of the ACT Test during 11th grade.
- Several states, including CA, NY, and TX, have both a sizable number of ACT-tested high school graduates and a relatively low ACT Test participation rate.

## Percentage-Point Change in ACT Participation Rate, 2003–2012



Map reads: Since 2003, the ACT Test participation rate in Michigan has increased by more than 20 percentage points.

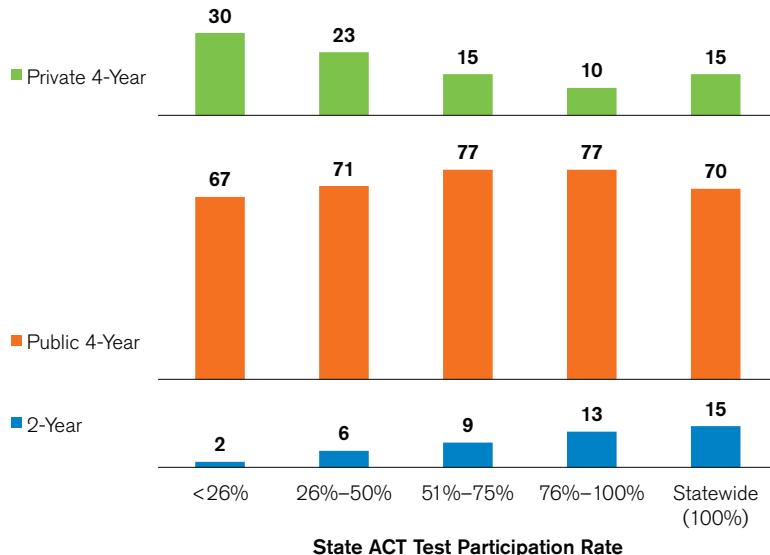
- Over the past 10 years, the share of all high school graduates who took the ACT Test increased by 12 percentage points, from 40% in 2003 to 52% in 2012.
- ACT Test participation rates in 9 states increased by more than 20 percentage points between 2003 and 2012. Four of these states (KY, MI, TN, and WY) began administering the ACT Test statewide during this time.
- In other states, like FL, GA, and SC, the ACT Test participation rate increased from fewer than 50% of high school graduates tested in 2003 to more than 50% tested by 2012.

# College Type Preference

When students register for the ACT Test, they can indicate the type of college that they prefer to attend. In general, the students' college type preference is a good indicator of the type of college that they eventually attend.

- Regardless of state ACT Test participation rate, the majority of ACT-tested students prefer to attend a public 4-year college.
- The percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend a 2-year college increases with state ACT Test participation rate.
- With the exception of states that administer the ACT Test statewide, the percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend a private 4-year college decreases as the state ACT Test participation rate increases.
  
- As ACT Composite score increases, the percentage of students who prefer to attend a 2-year college decreases.
- Conversely, the percentage of students who prefer to attend a private 4-year college increases as ACT Composite score increases.
- The percentage of students who prefer to attend a public 4-year college peaks at an ACT Composite score range of 20–23 and then declines as the ACT Composite score continues to increase.
- Only in the ACT Composite score range of 33–36 do the majority of students prefer to attend a private as opposed to a public 4-year college.

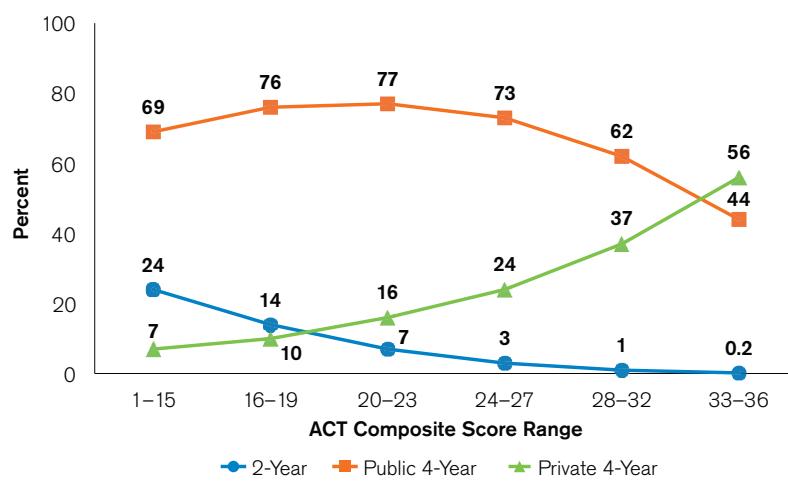
**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend Different College Types by State ACT Test Participation Rate, 2012**



Graph reads: 70% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 in states administering the ACT Test statewide prefer to attend a public 4-year college.

Note: Based on 86% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom college type preference is available. Percentages within state ACT Test participation rate category may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

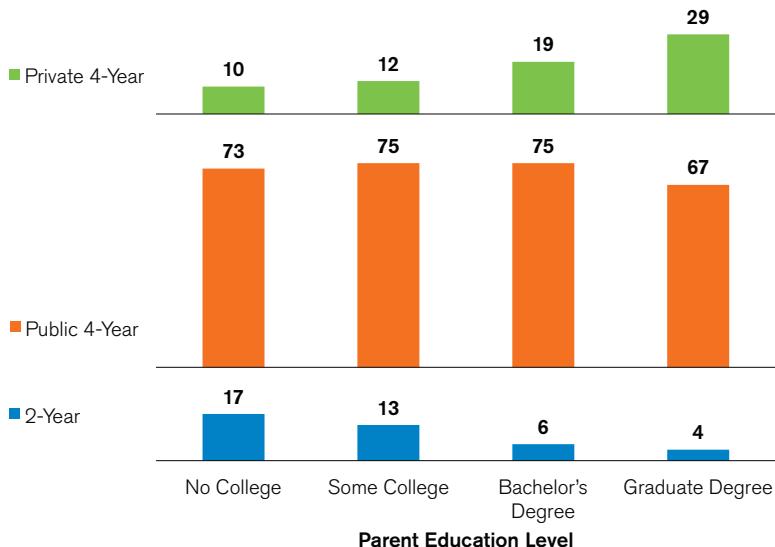
**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend Different College Types by ACT Composite Score, 2012**



Graph reads: 3% of the high school graduating class of 2012 who earn an ACT Composite score in the range of 24–27 prefer to attend a 2-year college.

Note: Based on 86% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom college type preference is available. Percentages within ACT Composite score range may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

### Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend Different College Types by Parent Education Level, 2012

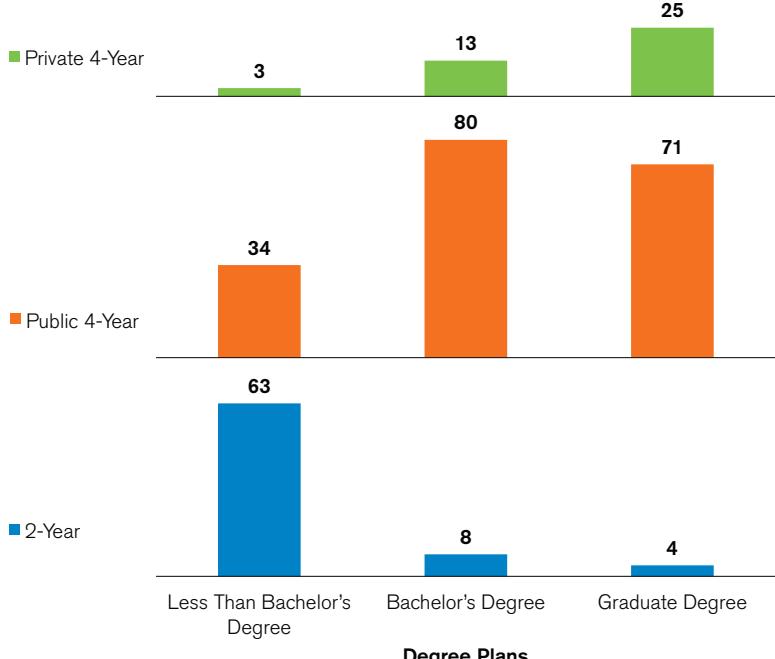


Graph reads: 29% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who have at least one parent with a graduate degree prefer to attend a private 4-year college.

Note: Based on 80% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom college type preference and parent education level are available. Percentages within parent education level may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

- Within each parent education level, the majority of ACT-tested students prefer to attend a public 4-year college.
- As parent education level increases, the percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend a 2-year college decreases.
- In contrast, the percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend a private 4-year college increases with parent education level.

### Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend Different College Types by Degree Plans, 2012



Graph reads: 4% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who plan to obtain a graduate degree prefer to attend a 2-year college.

Note: Based on 84% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom college type preference and degree plans are available. Percentages within degree plans may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

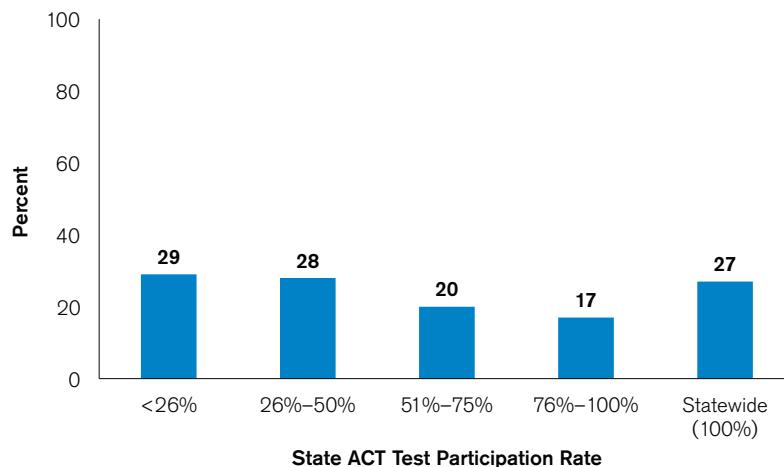
- A clear majority of ACT-tested students who plan to obtain an associate's degree or an undergraduate certificate prefer to attend a 2-year college.
- Conversely, the majority of ACT-tested students who plan to obtain a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree prefer to attend a public 4-year college.
- As degree aspirations increase, so does the percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend a private 4-year college.

## Out-of-State Preference

Students can indicate the state in which they prefer to attend college when they register for the ACT Test. Comparing their preferred state with their state of residence provides an early indicator of students' eventual in-state or out-of-state college enrollment.

- In those states in which no more than half of all high school graduates take the ACT Test, just under 30% of ACT-tested students prefer to attend college out of state.
- With the exception of states that administer the ACT Test statewide, as state ACT Test participation rate increases beyond 50%, the percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend college out of state decreases.
- Beginning with an ACT Composite score range of 16–19, the percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend college out of state increases as ACT Composite score increases.
- The relatively large percentage of ACT-tested students in the score range of 1–15 who prefer to attend college out of state is inconsistent with this overall pattern.

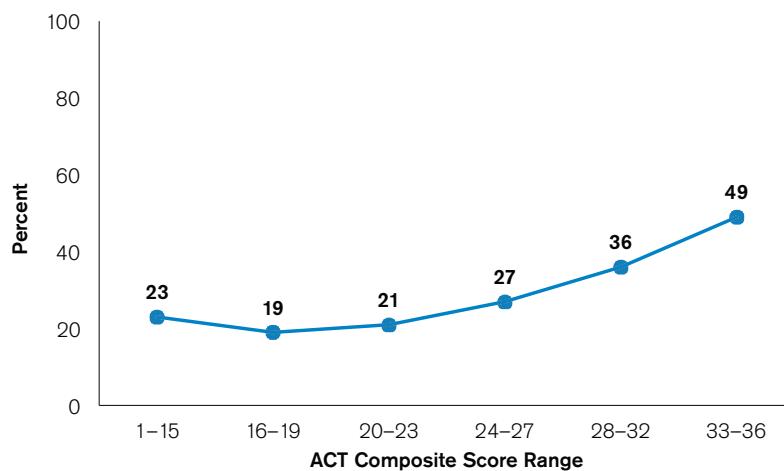
**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend College Out of State by State ACT Test Participation Rate, 2012**



Graph reads: 27% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who reside in states in which the ACT Test is administered statewide prefer to attend college out of state.

Note: Based on 84% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom state preference is available.

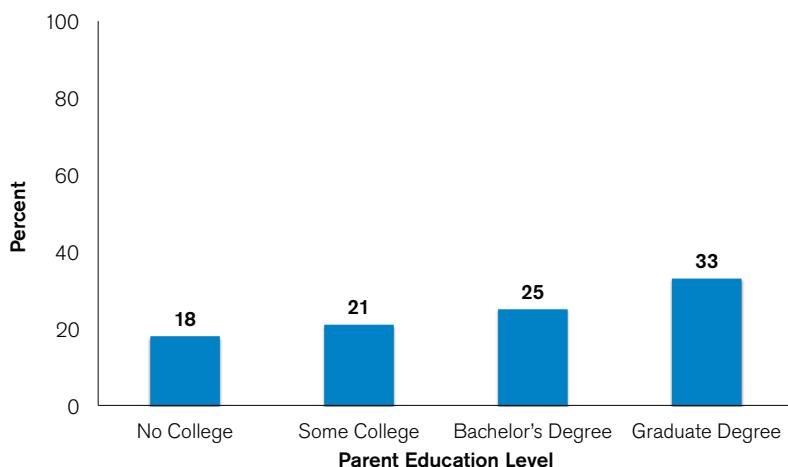
**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend College Out of State by ACT Composite Score, 2012**



Graph reads: Among the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who earn an ACT Composite score in the range of 28–32, 36% prefer to attend college out of state.

Note: Based on 84% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom state preference is available.

### **Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend College Out of State by Parent Education Level, 2012**

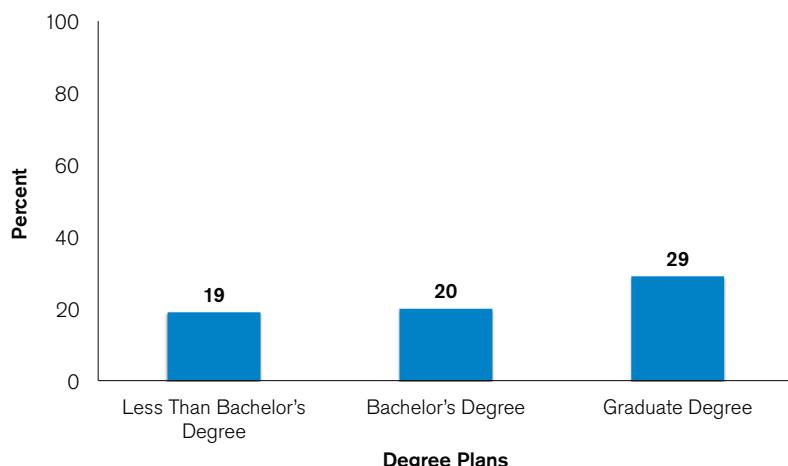


Graph reads: 25% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who have at least one parent with a bachelor's degree prefer to attend college out of state.

Note: Based on 78% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom state preference and parent education level are available.

- The percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend an out-of-state college increases as parent education level increases.
- Among those ACT-tested students who have at least one parent with a graduate degree, 1 out of 3 prefers to attend college out of state.
- Among those ACT-tested students whose parents did not go to college, only about 1 out of 6 prefers to attend an out-of-state college.

### **Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend College Out of State by Degree Plans, 2012**



Graph reads: Among the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who plan to earn a bachelor's degree, 20% prefer to attend college out of state.

Note: Based on 82% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom state preference and degree plans are available.

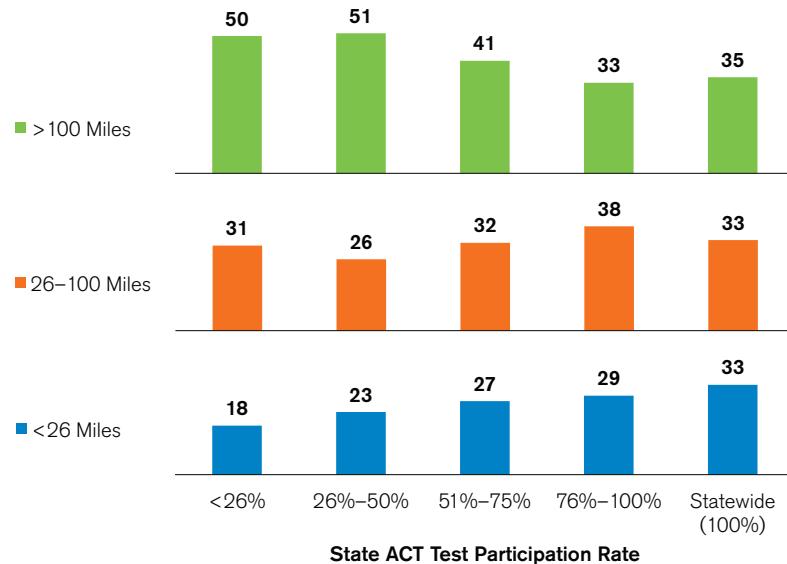
- Relative to their peers who plan to earn a bachelor's degree or some other undergraduate credential (e.g., an associate's degree or certificate), a larger percentage of ACT-tested students who plan to earn a graduate degree prefer to attend college out of state.

## Distance Preference

Students can indicate their preferred distance to college at the time that they register for the ACT Test. In general, the students' distance preference is a good indicator of their level of mobility.

- The percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend college within 25 miles of their home increases with state ACT Test participation rate.
- In states in which no more than half of all high school graduates take the ACT Test, roughly 50% of all ACT-tested students prefer to attend college more than 100 miles away from their home.
- As state ACT Test participation rate increases beyond 50%, the share of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend college more than 100 miles away from their home decreases.
- The percentage of students who prefer to attend college within 25 miles of their home decreases as ACT Composite score increases.
- Conversely, as ACT Composite score increases, so does the percentage of students who prefer to attend college more than 100 miles away from their home.
- The percentage of students who prefer to attend college 26–100 miles away from their home peaks at an ACT Composite score in the range of 20–23 and then declines as ACT Composite score continues to increase.

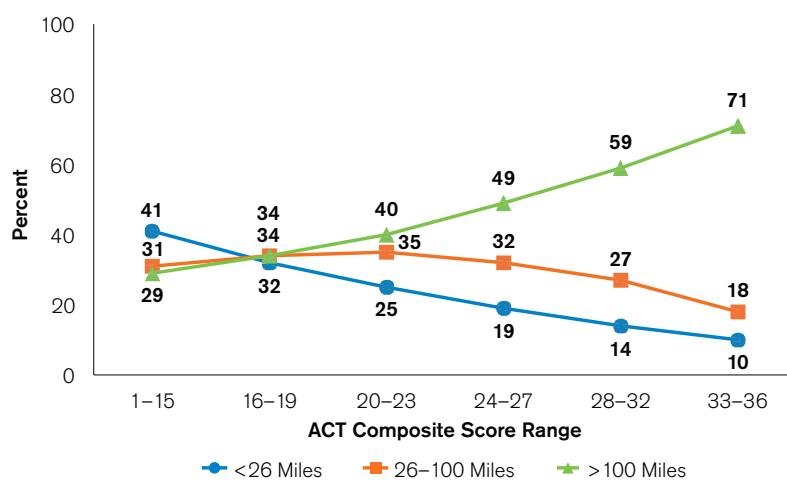
**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend College Within a Certain Distance by State ACT Test Participation Rate, 2012**



Graph reads: 33% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 in states administering the ACT Test statewide prefer to attend college 26–100 miles away from their home.

Note: Based on 60% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom distance preference is available. Percentages within state ACT Test participation rate may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

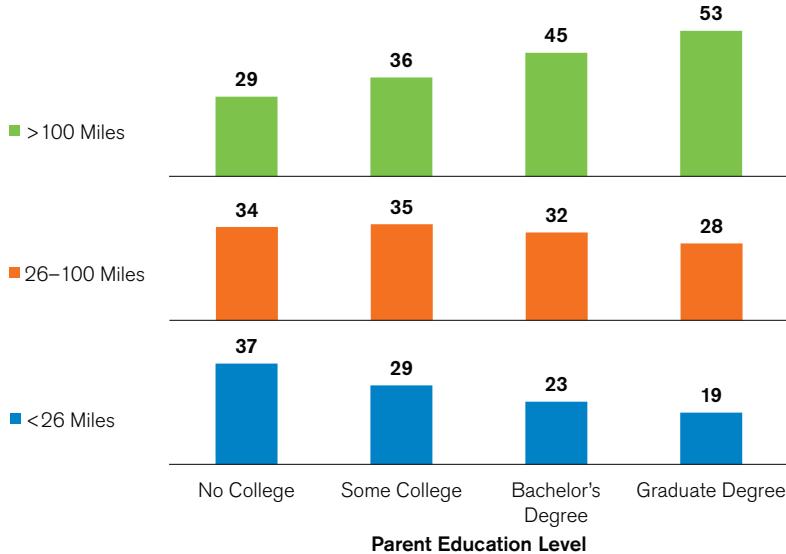
**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend College Within a Certain Distance by ACT Composite Score, 2012**



Graph reads: 71% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who earn an ACT Composite score in the range of 33–36 prefer to attend college more than 100 miles away from their home.

Note: Based on 60% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom distance preference is available. Percentages within ACT Composite score range may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

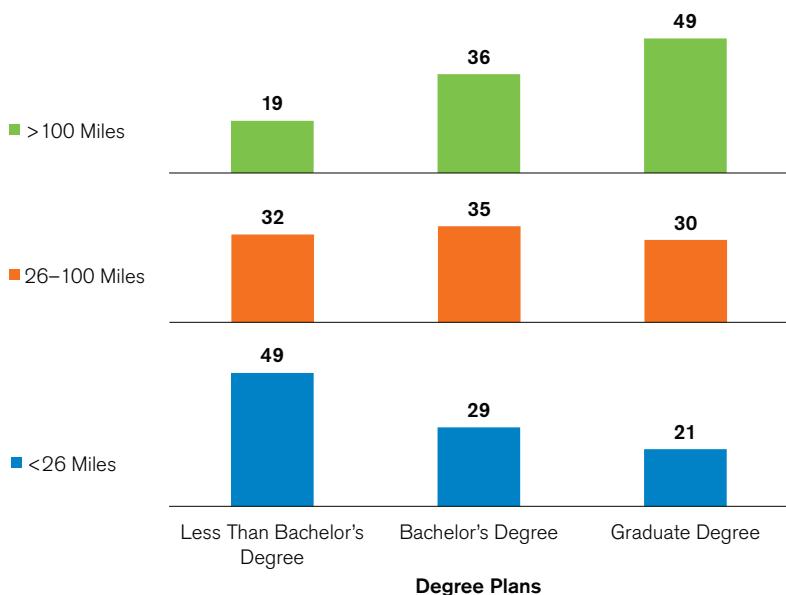
### Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend College Within a Certain Distance by Parent Education Level, 2012



Graph reads: 37% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 whose parents did not attend college prefer to attend college within 25 miles of their home.

Note: Based on 57% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom distance preference and parent education level are available. Percentages within parent education level may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

### Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Prefer to Attend College Within a Certain Distance by Degree Plans, 2012



Graph reads: 35% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who plan to obtain a bachelor's degree prefer to attend college 26–100 miles away from their home.

Note: Based on 59% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom distance preference and degree plans are available. Percentages within degree plans may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

- The percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend college more than 100 miles away from their home increases as parent education level increases.
- In contrast, the percentage of ACT-tested students who prefer to attend college within 25 miles of their home decreases as parent education level increases.

## Time of First Testing

As seen later in this report, the grade level in which students first take the ACT Test can serve as a broad indicator of numerous college choice behaviors.

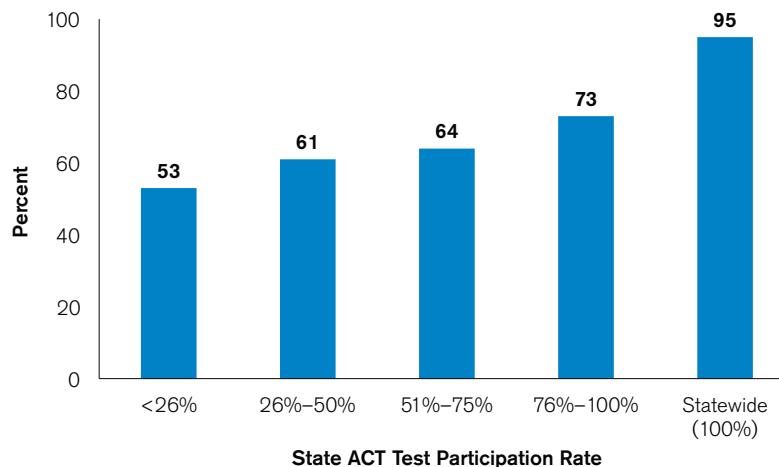
- The percentage of ACT-tested high school graduates who first test before 12th grade increases with state ACT Test participation rate.

Because nearly all students (95%) in statewide administration states first test during 11th grade, there is no relationship between the students' time of first testing and their background or achievement level.

In *non-statewide* administration states, however, there are notable differences in time of first testing by the students' background and achievement level.

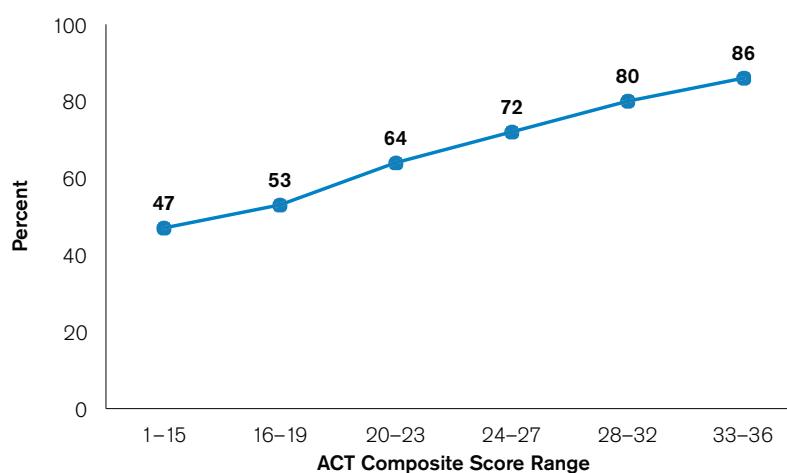
- In non-statewide administration states, the share of students who first test before 12th grade increases with ACT Composite score.
- Less than half (47%) of all students with an ACT Composite score in the range of 1–15 first test before 12th grade. In comparison, 86% of students in the score range of 33–36 first test before 12th grade.

**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates First Testing Before Grade 12 by State ACT Test Participation Rate, 2012**



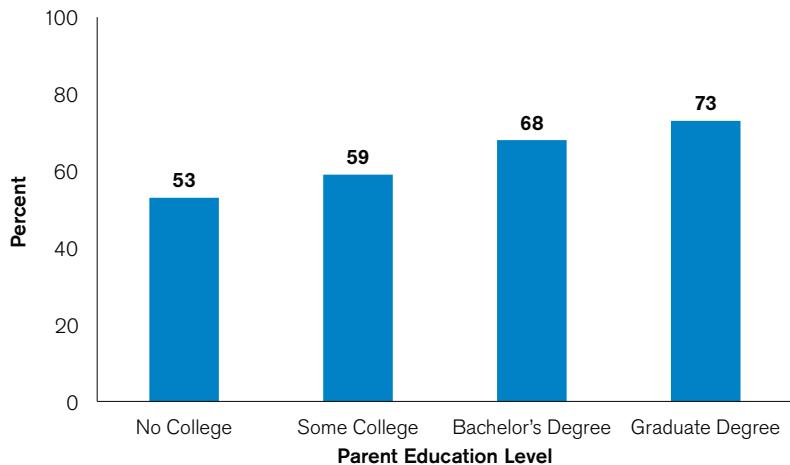
Graph reads: 64% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 first test before 12th grade in states where the ACT Test participation rate is between 51% and 75%.

**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates in Non-Statewide Administration States First Testing Before Grade 12 by ACT Composite Score, 2012**



Graph reads: In states that do not administer the ACT Test statewide, 80% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 with an ACT Composite score in the range of 28–32 first test before 12th grade.

**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates in Non-Statewide Administration States First Testing Before Grade 12 by Parent Education Level, 2012**

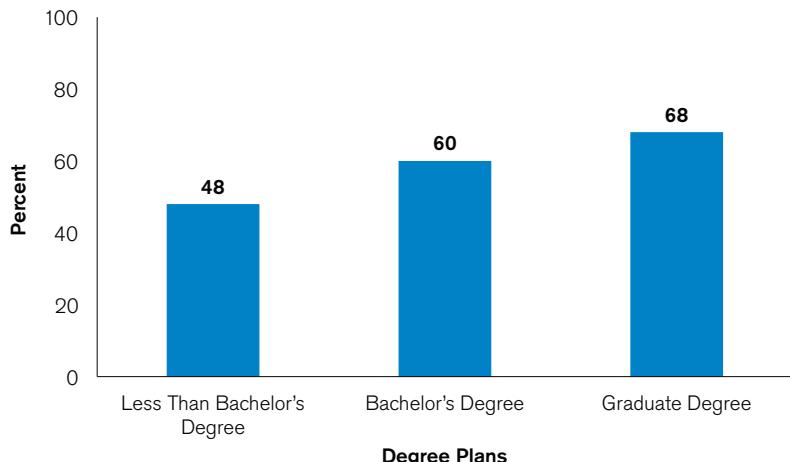


Graph reads: In states that do not administer the ACT Test statewide, 68% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 whose parents earned a bachelor's degree first test before the 12th grade.

Note: Based on 81% of ACT-tested high school graduates in non-statewide administration states for whom parent education level is available.

- In non-statewide administration states, the share of ACT-tested students who first test before 12th grade increases with the education level of the students' parents.
- Among those ACT-tested students whose parents did not attend college, a little more than half (53%) first test before 12th grade.
- In contrast, nearly 3 out of 4 (73%) ACT-tested students whose parents earned a graduate degree first test before 12th grade.

**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates in Non-Statewide Administration States First Testing Before Grade 12 by Degree Plans, 2012**



- In non-statewide administration states, the percentage of ACT-tested students who first test before 12th grade increases with students' degree aspirations.
- A little more than two-thirds (68%) of all ACT-tested students who plan to earn a graduate degree first test before 12th grade.
- In contrast, a little less than half (48%) of all students who plan to earn an associate's degree or certificate first test before 12th grade.

Graph reads: In states that do not administer the ACT Test statewide, 60% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who plan to earn a bachelor's degree first test before 12th grade.

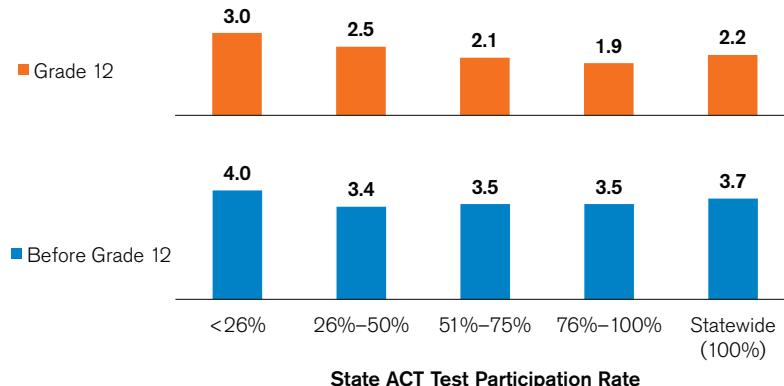
Note: Based on 89% of ACT-tested high school graduates in non-statewide administration states for whom degree plans are available.

## Score Sending

ACT-tested students often send their scores to a limited number of colleges that they would consider attending. The size of this consideration set and a college's rank within it are important indicators of the student's eventual enrollment.

- Within each state ACT Test participation rate category, students who first test before 12th grade send their ACT Test scores to a higher average number of colleges than their peers who first test during 12th grade.
- For students who first test during 12th grade, the average number of colleges to which they send their ACT Test scores decreases as the state ACT Test participation rate increases.

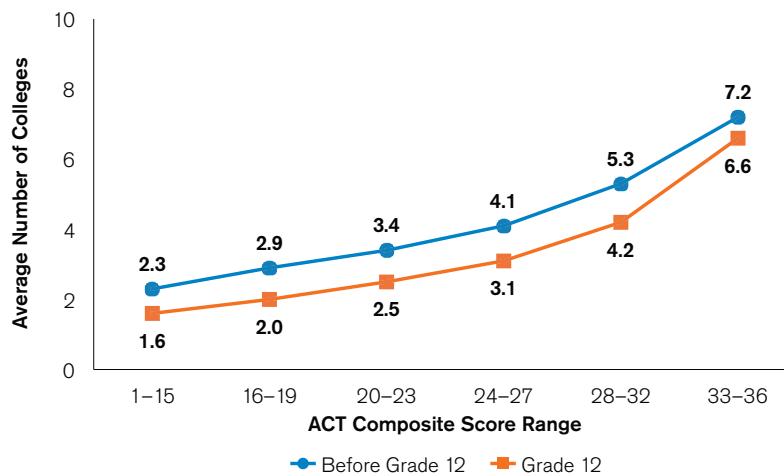
Average Number of Colleges to Which ACT-Tested High School Graduates Send Test Scores by State ACT Test Participation Rate and Grade Level at First Testing, 2012



Graph reads: In states administering the ACT Test statewide, members of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who first test before 12th grade send their test scores to an average of 3.7 colleges.

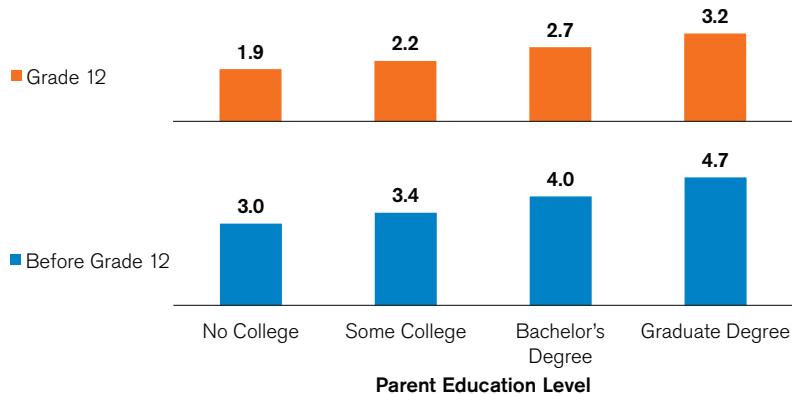
- Within each ACT Composite score range, students who first test before 12th grade send their ACT Test scores to a higher average number of colleges than students who first test during 12th grade.
- The average number of colleges to which students send their ACT Test scores increases with ACT Composite score.

Average Number of Colleges to Which ACT-Tested High School Graduates Send Test Scores by ACT Composite Score and Grade Level at First Testing, 2012



Graph reads: Members of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who first test before 12th grade with an ACT Composite score in the range of 24-27 send their test scores to an average of 4.1 colleges.

**Average Number of Colleges to Which ACT-Tested High School Graduates Send Test Scores by Parent Education Level and Grade Level at First Testing, 2012**

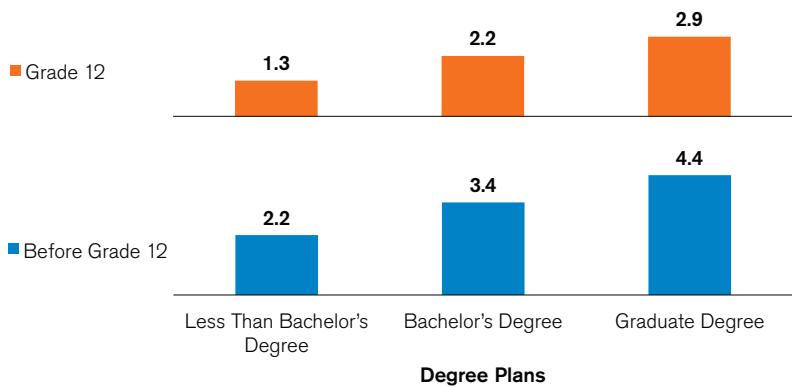


Graph reads: Members of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who first test during 12th grade and have at least one parent with some college education send their test scores to an average of 2.2 colleges.

Note: Based on 82% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom parent education level is available.

- The average number of colleges to which students send their ACT Test scores increases as parent education level increases.
- Within each parent education level, students who first test before 12th grade send their ACT Test scores to a higher average number of colleges than their peers who first test during 12th grade.

**Average Number of Colleges to Which ACT-Tested High School Graduates Send Test Scores by Degree Plans and Grade Level at First Testing, 2012**



Graph reads: Members of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who first test during 12th grade and plan to earn a bachelor's degree send their test scores to an average of 2.2 colleges.

Note: Based on 88% of ACT-tested high school graduates for whom degree plans are available.

- Regardless of grade level at first testing, as degree aspirations increase, so does the average number of colleges to which students send their ACT Test scores.
- Within each degree aspiration category, students who first test before 12th grade send a higher average number of test scores to colleges than their peers who first test during 12th grade.

## EOS State Context

Eligible colleges can use EOS to identify and select prospective students whose backgrounds and academic achievement levels align with the mix of desired characteristics of the students in their applicant pool.

- Of more than 3,200 colleges that receive official ACT Test score reports, 29% use EOS to select student names to support their marketing and recruitment efforts.
- In general, the percentage of colleges participating in EOS increases as the state ACT Test participation rate increases.
- Almost half of all public 4-year colleges participate in EOS, compared to 4 out of 10 private 4-year colleges and 1 out of 10 2-year colleges.

Students can opt into EOS when they register to take the ACT Test. EOS provides students with information about educational opportunities by making the names of ACT-tested students available to colleges that meet EOS eligibility guidelines.

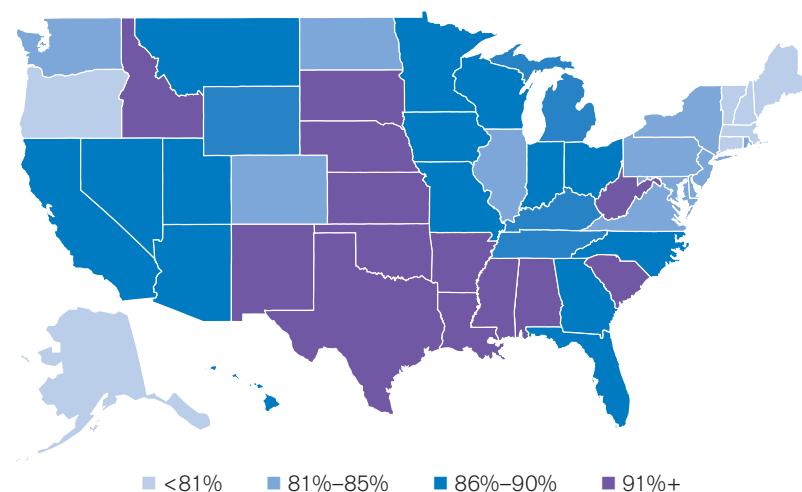
- About 88% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 opt into EOS during high school, but there are differences by region and state.
- EOS opt-in rates tend to be higher among southern states, whereas lower EOS opt-in rates occur in the Northeast.

**Percent of Colleges That Participate in EOS by State ACT Test Participation Rate and College Type, 2012**

State ACT Test Participation Rate	2-Year	Public 4-Year	Private 4-Year	Total
<26%	1	16	32	18
26%–50%	4	30	38	24
51%–75%	17	65	41	36
76%–100%	11	68	50	37
Statewide (100%)	17	80	45	39
Total	10	48	39	29

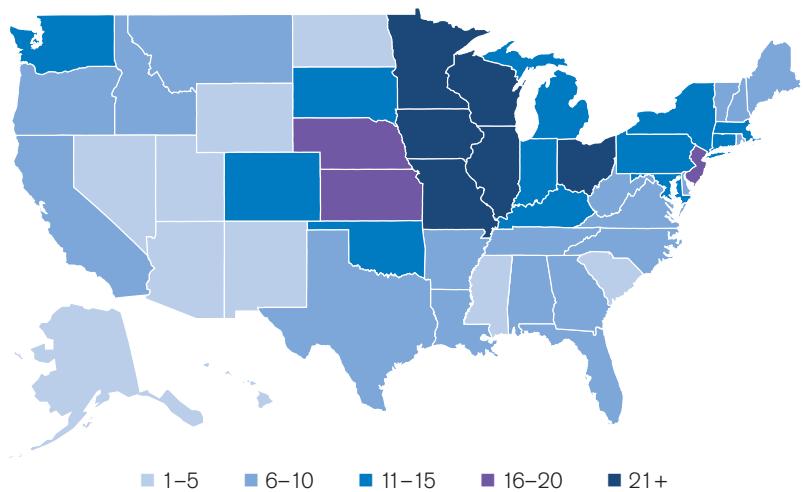
Table reads: 45% of private 4-year colleges located in states that administer the ACT Test statewide participate in EOS.

**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Opt Into EOS, 2012**



Map reads: More than 90% of ACT-tested high school graduates in South Carolina opt into EOS.

## Average Number of Times EOS Students' Names Are Selected, 2012

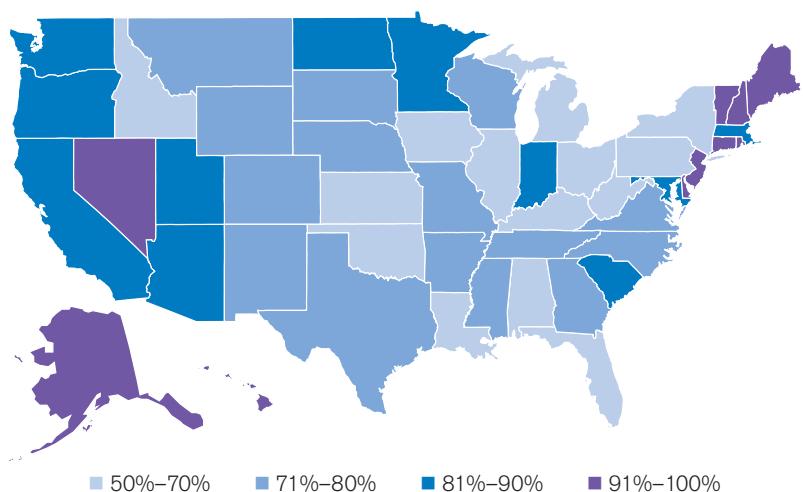


Map reads: On average, an ACT-tested high school graduate from Ohio who opts into EOS has his or her name selected by more than 20 colleges.

Note: Based on 88% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who opted into EOS during high school.

- Students who opt into EOS (hereafter referred to as "EOS students") have their names selected by an average of 13 colleges. Selection through EOS varies notably by students' state of origin, however.
- On average, EOS students located within a concentration of Midwestern states have their names selected by more colleges than their peers in other areas of the country.
- New Jersey is the only state outside of the Midwest where EOS students have their names selected by more than 15 colleges, on average.

## Percent of EOS-Selected Student Names Requested by Out-of-State Colleges, 2012



Map reads: More than 90% of all EOS-selected names for students residing in Maine are requested by out-of-state colleges.

Note: Based on 72% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who opted into EOS during high school and were selected by at least one college.

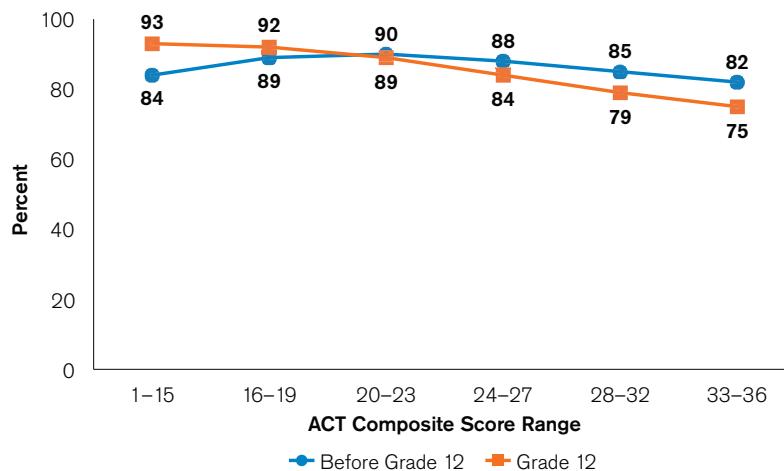
- In every state, at least half of all EOS-selected names are requested by out-of-state colleges.
- With the exception of AK, HI, and NV, states with the highest percentage of EOS-selected names requested by out-of-state colleges are located in the Northeast region of the United States.
- Compared with the Midwest and South, states located in the far western part of the country also have a larger percentage of EOS-selected names requested by out-of-state colleges.

## EOS Cycle by ACT Composite Score

Students' likelihood of opting into EOS, being selected by a college through EOS, and subsequently sending ACT Test scores to at least one college that selects them varies by both grade level at first testing and ACT Composite score.

- For students who first test before 12th grade, a larger share of students with scores in the middle ranges of the ACT Composite score scale opt into EOS relative to the share of students at either the lower or upper ranges of the ACT Composite score scale.
- For students who first test during 12th grade, the share of students who opt into EOS declines steadily as ACT Composite score increases.

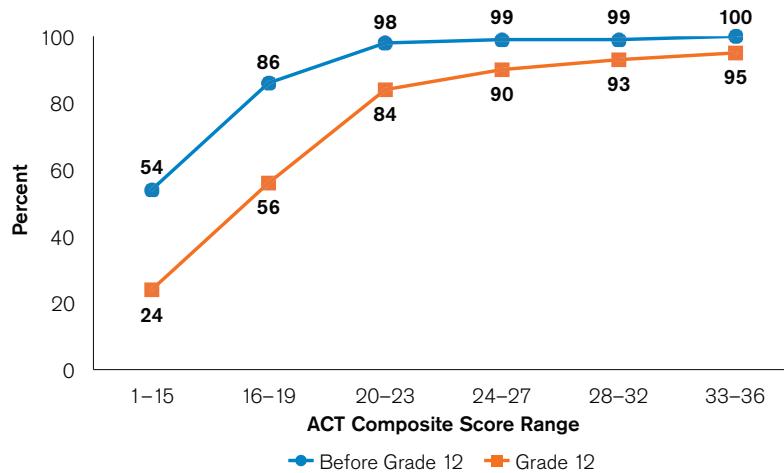
**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Opt Into EOS by ACT Composite Score and Grade Level at First Testing, 2012**



Graph reads: 92% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who first test during 12th grade with an ACT Composite score in the range of 16–19 opt into EOS.

- Regardless of grade level at first testing, the percentage of EOS students whose names are selected by at least one college increases with ACT Composite score.
- Within each ACT Composite score range, EOS students who first test before 12th grade have their names selected by at least one college at higher rates than their peers who first test during 12th grade. This grade-level gap narrows as ACT Composite score increases.

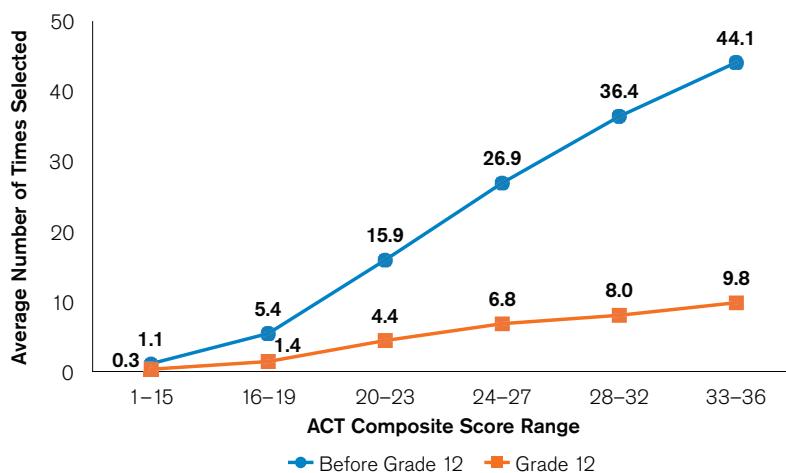
**Percent of EOS Students Whose Names Are Selected by ACT Composite Score and Grade Level at First Testing, 2012**



Graph reads: 84% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who first test during 12th grade, opt into EOS, and have an ACT Composite score in the range of 20–23 are selected by at least one college through EOS.

Note: Based on 88% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who opted into EOS during high school.

### Average Number of Times EOS Students' Names Are Selected by ACT Composite Score and Grade Level at First Testing, 2012

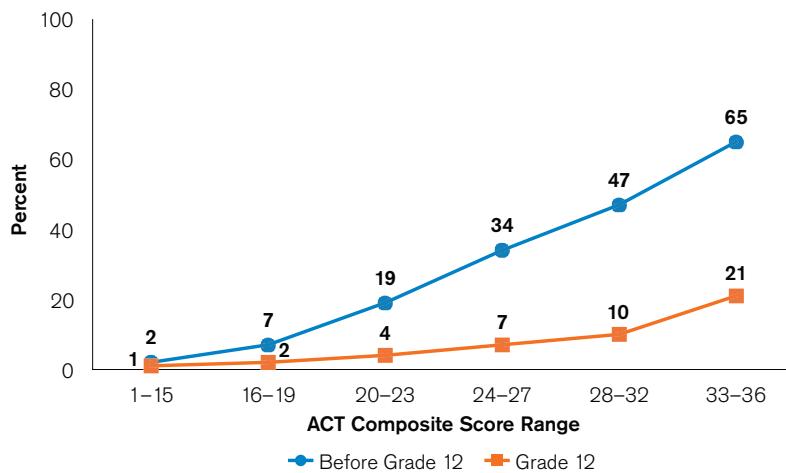


Graph reads: ACT-tested high school graduates from the class of 2012 who first test during 12th grade, opt into EOS, and have an ACT Composite score in the range of 24–27 are selected by an average of 6.8 colleges through EOS.

Note: Based on 88% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who opted into EOS during high school.

- Regardless of grade level at first testing, the average number of times that EOS students' names are selected increases with ACT Composite score.
- Within all ACT Composite score ranges, EOS students who first test during 12th grade have their names selected by a smaller average number of colleges than their peers who first test before 12th grade. This grade-level gap widens as ACT Composite score increases.

### Percent of EOS-Selected Students Who Send ACT Test Scores to at Least One College that Selects Them by ACT Composite Score and Grade Level at First Testing, 2012



Graph reads: 47% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who first test before 12th grade, have an ACT Composite score in the range of 28–32, opt into EOS, and are selected by at least one college through EOS subsequently send their test scores to at least one of those colleges.

Note: Based on 72% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012 who opted into EOS during high school and were selected by at least one college.

- The percentage of EOS-selected students who subsequently send their ACT Test scores to at least one of the colleges that selects them increases as ACT Composite score increases.
- Within any ACT Composite score range, a larger percentage of EOS-selected students who first test before 12th grade send their test scores to at least one college that selects them. This gap widens as ACT Composite score increases.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Finding 1: Enrollment Preferences Vary by Student Characteristics

As students' ACT Composite scores, parent education levels, and degree aspirations increase, so does their likelihood of preferring 4-year colleges (in general), 4-year private colleges (in particular), out-of-state colleges, and colleges located farther from their homes. These findings are consistent with the findings of numerous research studies conducted over the past few decades that highlight the systematic differences among students in the type and location of colleges in which they enroll. College preferences differ by student characteristics in similar ways both at the time of score sending and at the time of enrollment. This suggests that self-reported preferences are fairly stable throughout the college choice process and that many students act on their preferences when making their enrollment decisions. The extent to which students' college choices match their self-reported preferences will be explored further in *Part 2* of this report, to be released in July 2013.

#### *Recommendations:*

- Admissions personnel should use self-reported college preferences in tandem with student characteristics to identify prospective students who are more likely to enroll and to track yield rates for students at different stages of the enrollment funnel.
- Admissions personnel should use self-reported college preferences as a means of developing marketing messages that reinforce enrollment preferences fitting the characteristics of the college as well as messages intended to modify students' college preferences when they don't match the characteristics of the college.

### Key Finding 2: College Choice Behaviors Differ in Predictable Ways by Student Achievement Level

ACT research has consistently found that student academic achievement as measured by ACT Composite score is an important indicator of student behavior during the college choice process. For example, with the exception of students in states that administer the ACT Test statewide to all 11th graders, students' chances of first taking the ACT Test before 12th grade increase with their academic achievement level. Students with higher ACT Composite scores also tend to send their test scores to a greater number of colleges, and they are more likely to send their test scores to at least one college that selected them through EOS.

#### *Recommendations:*

- When placing EOS orders, admissions personnel should segment their search names using tighter ACT Composite score ranges (e.g., 3–5 points) to more effectively track yield rates for students at different stages of the enrollment funnel. This tracking will help colleges to better understand the differences in college choice behaviors by academic achievement level that are unique to that institution.
- When placing EOS orders, admissions personnel should use ACT Composite score ranges that exhibit desired testing and enrollment behaviors.

## Key Finding 3: Enrollment Preferences and College Choice Behaviors Vary by State

As the ACT Test participation rate in a state increases, ACT-tested students look and behave more like typical high school graduates in the state. As the ACT Test participation rate in a state decreases, ACT-tested students tend to be a more select subset of high school graduates in the state. These differences are evident both in the college preferences and college choice behaviors of ACT-tested students across the states. For example, ACT-tested students in states with *lower* ACT Test participation rates are more likely than their peers to prefer a 4-year college (especially a 4-year private college), an out-of-state college, and a college located farther from their homes. In contrast, relative to ACT-tested students in other states, those in states with *higher* ACT Test participation rates are more likely to have taken the ACT Test before 12th grade, opted into EOS, and sent their ACT Test scores to at least one college that selected them through EOS. For any market where a college searches for students, the ACT Test participation rate provides important clues to student enrollment intentions and likely enrollment behaviors.

### Recommendations:

- Admissions personnel should take into consideration both the historic trends and future state policy changes that may have an impact on the ACT Test participation rates in their state and other states in which they recruit ACT-tested students. For example, in the 2013 graduating class, North Carolina's ACT Test participation rate will increase to nearly 100% due to a recent policy to administer the ACT Test to all public high school 11th graders.
- When placing EOS orders, admissions personnel should pay close attention to the testing environment in a given market and choose the source of names that is most likely to provide a group of students that match the desired student characteristics and enrollment behaviors of their search pool.

# ACT Research

As a not-for-profit educational research organization, ACT is committed to producing research that focuses on key issues in education and workforce development. Our goal is to serve as a data resource. We strive to provide policymakers with the information they need to inform education and workforce development policy and to give educators the tools they need to lead more students toward college and career success. What follows are some of ACT's recent and most groundbreaking research studies. To review these studies, go to [www.act.org/research/summary](http://www.act.org/research/summary).

## The Condition of College & Career Readiness



Using ACT Test scores and the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2012* provides a series

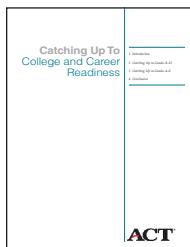
of graphics highlighting the college and career readiness of the ACT-tested high school class of 2012. This report is updated annually.

## Readiness Matters: The Impact of College Readiness on College Persistence and Degree Completion



This report contains ACT's most recent research on the importance of college readiness for college persistence and timely degree completion.

## Catching Up to College and Career Readiness



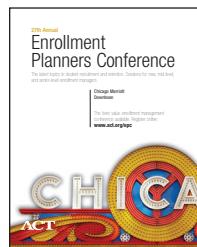
How many "far off track" 4th and 8th graders catch up to college and career readiness before they graduate?

## The Reality of College Readiness



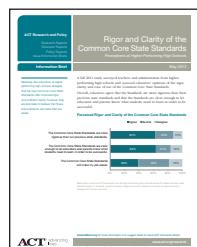
Matching data from ACT's high school graduate file and The National Student Clearinghouse®, these state-level reports identify the 2012 enrollment and migration status of 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates. Data are provided for two-year, public four-year, and private four-year colleges and include percentages of students meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This report will be released in May 2013.

## Enrollment Planners Conference



The ACT Enrollment Planners Conference is ACT's national enrollment management conference that draws more than 600 presenters and attendees from across the country every July.

## Enrollment Management Briefs



ACT's **Information Brief Series** presents quick snapshots of recent ACT research findings on a variety of topics in education and work, drawing on our extensive college readiness and career skills data. As part of that series, **Enrollment Management Briefs** focus on topics that are of particular interest to enrollment managers.

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A copy of this report can be found at  
**[www.act.org/collegechoice](http://www.act.org/collegechoice)**

